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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY MEETING WITH DARFUR REBELS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Representatives of Sudanese rebel movements from JEM, NMRD and SLA met with Deputy Secretary Negroponte in Ndjamena, April 17. The movements explained that three months of meetings in Chad had failed to unify the movements, but that they were still trying. The effort by GNU Vice-President Salva Kiir to unify the movements was deemed helpful but still in the early stages. Movement leaders stated that the Government of Sudan (GOS) was re-arming the janjaweed with stronger weapons, and reiterated that they would not deal with members of the AU's Abuja negotiating team. A JEM representative stressed the need for a mechanism to allow non-signatories to participate in Cease-Fire Commission meetings and argued that UN peace-keepers should only come to Darfur once a real peace had been signed. Deputy Secretary Negroponte noted that - in fact - Darfurians on the ground wanted peace-keepers now to stabilize the situation. He urged the movements to find unity in order to return to the negotiating table. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Deputy Secretary John D. Negroponte met with members of Sudanese rebel groups in Ndjamena, Chad on April 17. Assistant Secretary Frazer, NSC Director Pittman, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Garvelink, Colonel Giddens of the Office of the Defense Secretary and DCM (notetaker) attended the hour and a half discussion at the Ambassador's residence. On the rebel side, representatives of three major non-signatory factions attended: Khamis Abdullah, Chairman of the SLA and member of the National Redemption Front (NRF), Tadjadine Bechir Niam, NRF Coordinator and Representative of the JEM Executive Bureau and Khalill Abdulah of the NMRD.

¶3. (SBU) The Deputy Secretary explained that he had just returned from visiting Darfur and eastern Chad and wanted to hear from the rebels how best to advance the cause of peace in the region. Speaking for SLA, Chairman Khamis Abdullah thanked the United States for its support for Darfurians, and for having been the first to have identified the problem in Darfur as "ethnic cleansing." Bachar Idriss, speaking for the JEM, explained that the movements had been in Chad for about three months seeking to unify. He acknowledged that despite some good discussions, they had not yet succeeded in unifying. He thought that a couple more months might be necessary. Bachar Idriss seconded the points made by Khamis Abdullah concerning the importance of the United States, noting that the United States was pressing the issue in the Security Council. Bachar Idriss explained that the root cause of the Darfur conflict was the marginalization of the Darfur people. The movements sought fair representation for all the Darfur people.

¶4. (SBU) Tadjadine Niam (JEM) explained that the movements were ready to cooperate with United States; peace had been near at Abuja, but the imposition of an artificial deadline had made it impossible to achieve a just agreement. He stressed the importance of a functioning Cease Fire

Commission (CFC) to document violations and recommend sanctions to the AU Peace and Security Council. Since August 2006, non-signatories had not attended the CFC sessions and the security situation had deteriorated. He explained that different modalities could allow their delegates to attend: either create a new Commission, or allow different meetings for signatories and non-signatories. He called the AU "directly responsible" for the deterioration of the security situation and noted that movements were now documenting violations on their own. Tadjadine also related the three concerns of the movements: equal representation at the central level, wealth sharing and compensations, and arrangements whereby Darfurians -- who constitute some 75% of the Government of Sudan armed forces -- would be fairly represented in the top military leadership.

¶5. (SBU) Speaking last, Khalil Abdullah (NMRD) explained how his group had been denied a place at the table in Abuja. He stated that all of the movements were ready to discuss -- but pressure needed to be put on the GOS. The current meeting of Field Commanders in Darfur was not helping unity.

¶6. (SBU) The Deputy Secretary described the U.S. position concerning the proposed hybrid force with up to 20,000 peacekeepers and under UN command and control. He agreed with the movements that their speaking with one voice was key to returning to the negotiating table. He explained that the United States fully supported the efforts of Jan Eliasson and Salim Salim to advance peace in Darfur.

¶7. (SBU) In response, Bachar Idriss (JEM) agreed that no less than 20,000 peacekeepers on the ground were needed. But he argued that the peacekeepers should only come once a new peace agreement was signed. He stressed that a political

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settlement was needed first, before the troops. The Deputy Secretary pointed out that Darfurians on the ground saw it

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differently and were calling for forces now to stabilize the situation. Bachar Idriss responded that the GOS and the AU were complicating the situation: The GOS was re-arming the janjaweed with heavier weapons and artillery, and with cars rather than camels. All this had happened under the eyes of the AU. Furthermore, the AU had tried to split the movements and create many factions. He concluded that the movements would cooperate with the AU, but would not work with anyone who had been on the Abuja team.

¶8. (SBU) Concerning the recent visit of Salva Kiir to Ndjamena, Bachar Idriss stated that cooperation between north and south was the only solution. He stated that Salva Kiir did not have the same "stature" as John Garang, but that discussions were ongoing. Bachar Idriss expressed unhappiness with Salva Kiir's initial approach, saying that he had arrived in Chad without doing any ground work. But talks were continuing, and the movements were now planning on going to see him. In sum, his initiative was helpful.

¶9. (U) Deputy Secretary Negroponte cleared this cable.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

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